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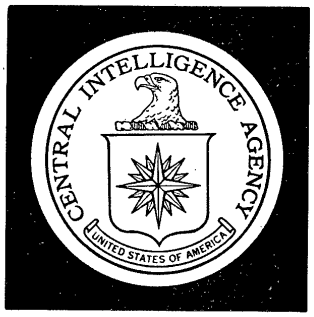

The President's Daily Brief

12 January 1970

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~~*Top Secret*~~

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

12 January 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

General Ojukwu's departure from Biafra will probably speed up what now appears to be the inevitable federal occupation of the secessionist enclave. Organized Biafran resistance, however, appears to be continuing. *(Page 1)*

Communist forces in Laos have taken some important steps toward erasing government rainy season gains. *(Page 2)*

The Lebanese Government is facing a new crisis over fedayeen operations in southern Lebanon and Israeli reprisals. *(Page 3)*

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NIGERIA

General Ojukwu left Biafra yesterday morning, possibly for Ivory Coast, after announcing on the radio that he was going in quest of peace. He evidently had concluded that the Biafrans could not stop an eventual federal drive into the enclave, although military messages prior to his departure did not indicate a general collapse of organized resistance.

The Nigerians may have taken Owerri by now, but it appears doubtful that they could have pushed on to Ihiala airstrip, some 30 road miles away. Biafran messages over the weekend indicated that the secessionists--although hard pressed--were holding near Onitsha and east of Umuna, two critical areas with road access to Ihiala airstrip. The Biafrans have another airstrip at Uga, which could receive arms supply aircraft, provided pilots remain willing to fly into the enclave. There are no signs that Uga is as yet under federal attack.

There are still large numbers of Biafran troops in organized military units within the enclave. Some of these troops may give up organized resistance in the wake of Ojukwu's departure, but they cannot be expected to surrender in large numbers. Most Biafrans, especially the soldiers, probably still genuinely fear that federal troops are bent on massacring them.

Ojukwu probably will try to get some kind of "peace" that the Biafrans can claim is not a surrender. The Nigerians probably will continue fighting at least until Biafra's airstrips are overrun, however, and may refuse to deal with Ojukwu at all.

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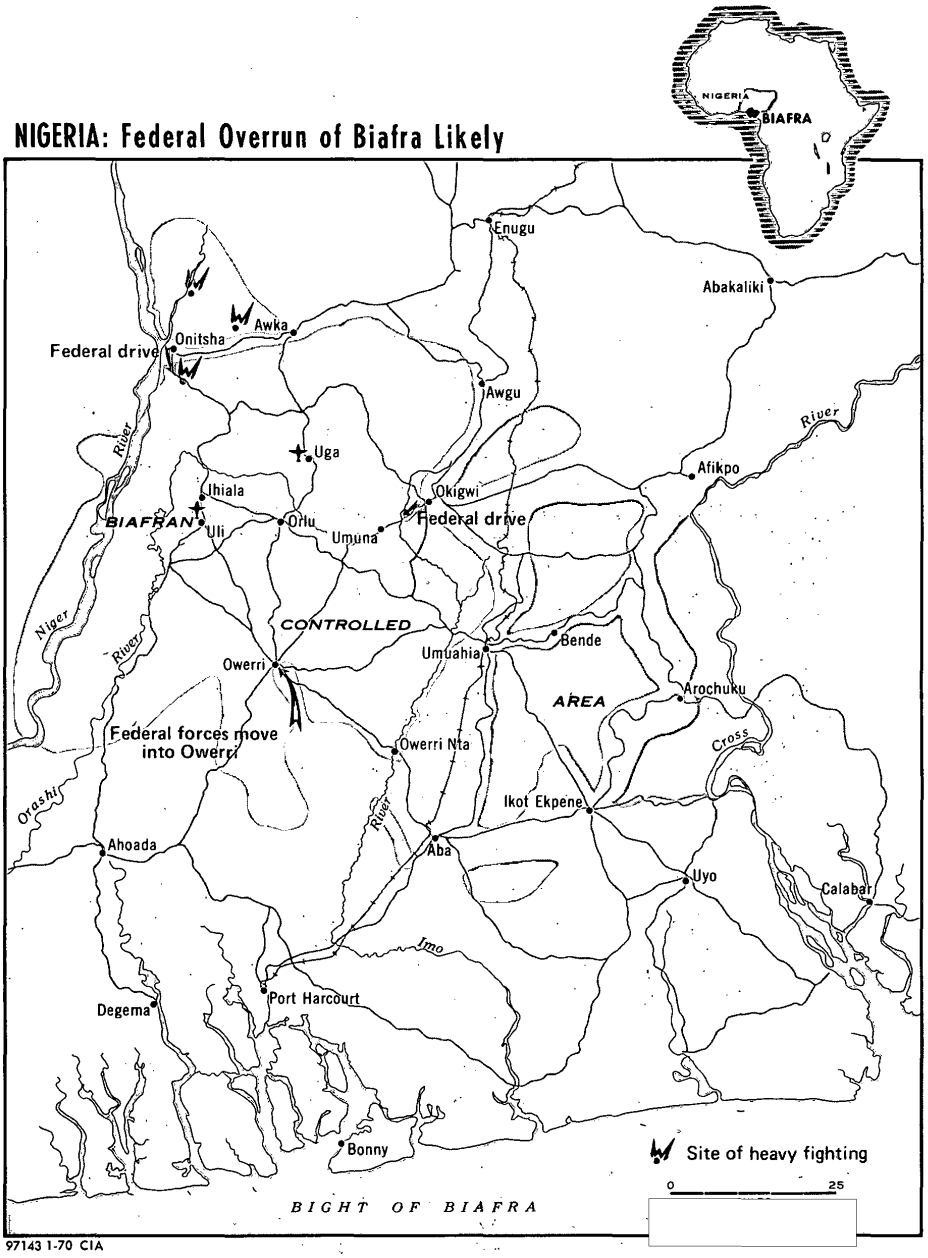
NIGERIA: Federal Overrun of Biafra Likely



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LAOS

Communist forces have taken some important steps toward erasing government rainy season gains. On 9 January a multibattalion North Vietnamese force overran two of the three government outposts atop Phou Nok Kok, a highpoint northeast of the Plaine des Jarres.

> *Weather conditions, which ruled out any close air support, probably contributed heavily to the government's inability to hold these key outposts.*
>
> *The enemy failed to capture the remaining position on a follow-up attack the next day but its fall appears to be only a matter of time.*

Communist forces also appear to be preparing a move against government defensive positions along the northern edge of the Plaine. Intercepted messages and reports from government patrols indicate fresh enemy troops are now moving into this area.

Further south, there has been little significant military activity following the rocket attack against Pakse on 9 January. New activity may be in the offing, however. [redacted] Last year Communist forces destroyed a large government weapons depot on the outskirts of the city.

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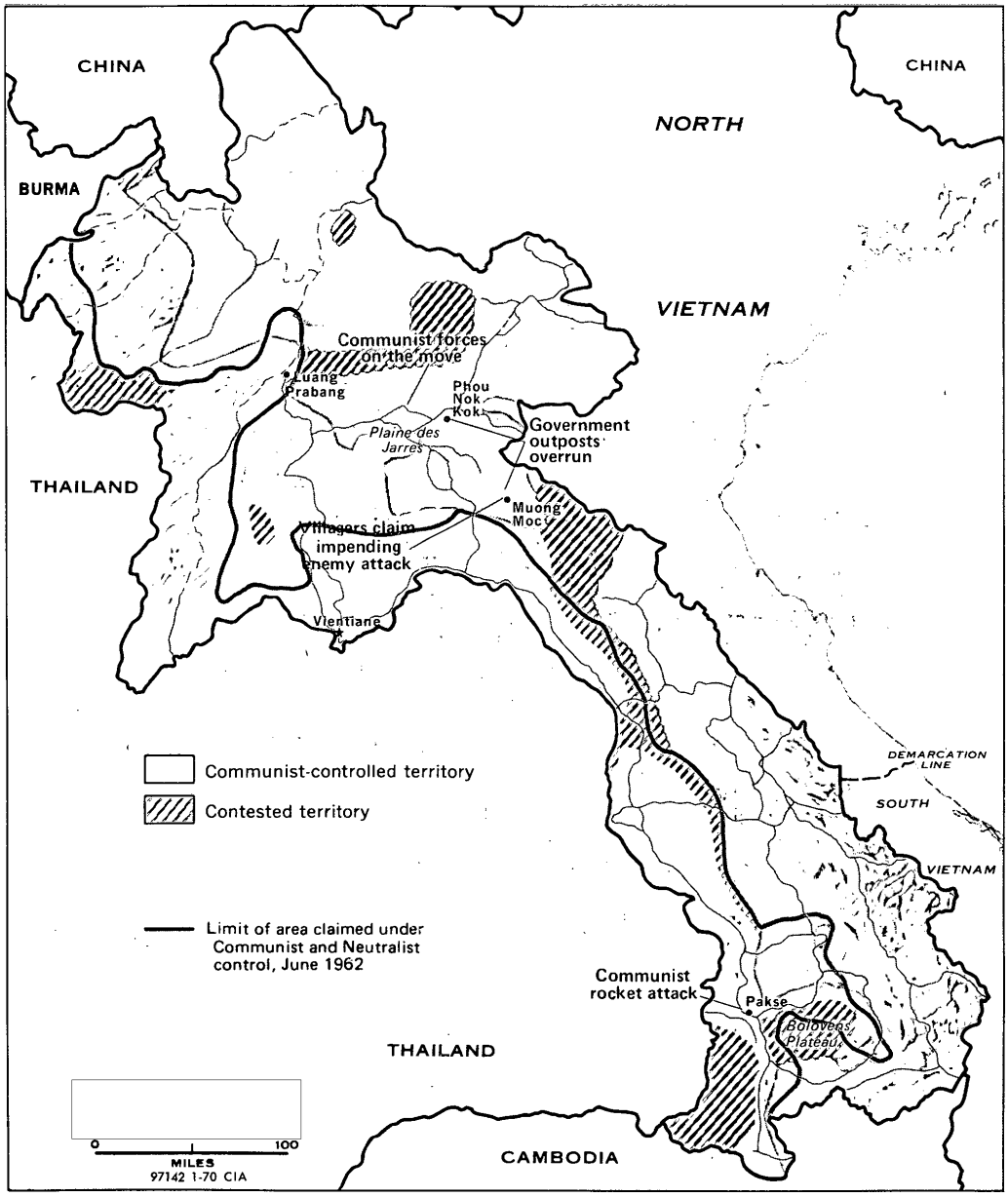
LAOS: Communist Forces Score Gains in the North



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LEBANON

Beirut's announcement on 8 January that the Palestinian guerrillas had agreed to new restrictions on their operations in Lebanon has brought a sharp denial from a group of fedayeen organizations. The government statement claimed that the fedayeen had agreed not to fire at Israeli targets from Lebanese territory and had also agreed not to train terrorists inside Lebanese refugee camps. The Palestinian answer, as quoted by Damascus Radio, denounced any such restrictions on fedayeen activities and called for continued Lebanese popular support of fedayeen efforts against Israel.

Both President Hilu and Foreign Minister Majdalani told Ambassador Porter on Saturday that Israeli air attacks were continuing even though there had been no fedayeen attacks from Lebanon over the last few days. These Israeli actions, they said, were hampering efforts to control the guerrillas; moreover, the air attacks also had led them to believe that Israel was planning ultimately to occupy parts of southern Lebanon.

The replacement of army commander in chief Bustani by the tough former commander of the southern district, General Jean Nujaym, may indicate the government's resolve to take a firmer line with the fedayeen. If the government attempts to force its new restrictions on the fedayeen, civil disturbances will be the likely result, bringing on a crisis of more serious proportions.

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